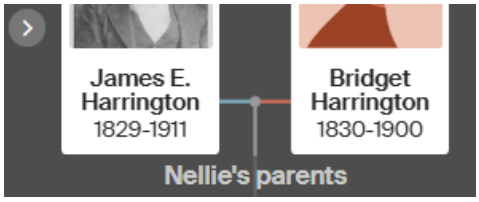
Research and results for James E. Harrington of Fairbury, Illlinois

Question

I'm looking for information regarding my family on my mother's side of my family. I know her father's name is James E Harrington, birth 4-10-1857, passed 9-22-1950. His wife is Mary C Carlin Harrington, birth 1866, passed 1920. They lived on a farm southwest of Fairbury. I wonder if their home is still standing. I would appreciate information you might have on them.

Previous Research

I have done a family tree and a history story about the Harrington that was a major horse dealer in Fairbury. Check the family tree on Ancestry.com and see if these people show up.

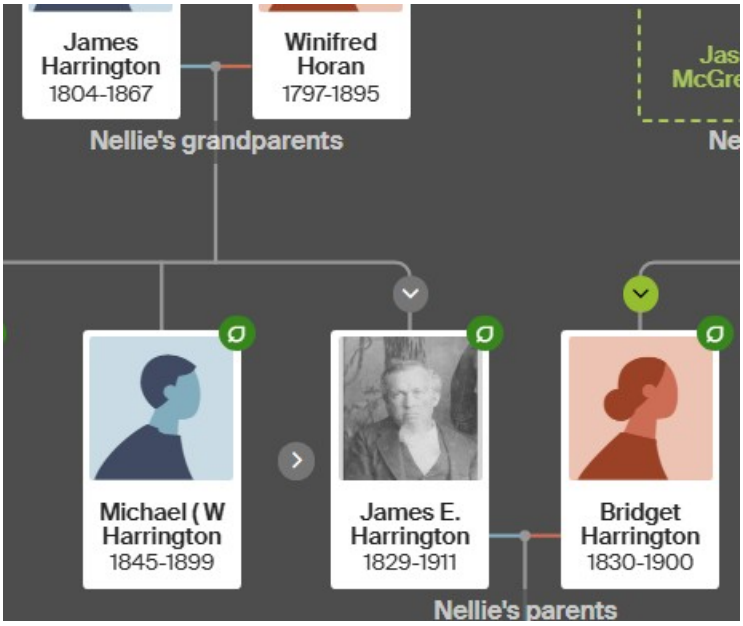


This James E. Harrington does not match up with the requested man, and his wife is different. I will do a family tree for the couple requested, then see if they belong to the horse guy's family tree.

I had a heck of a time doing a family tree !! Saw some hints in Ancestry.com that there were 2 brothers that came over from Ireland, one was named Edward and the other was named James. They each named one of their sons after their brothers, So Edward had a James and James had an Edward !!

Trying to resolve the family tree issue

Let's go back to the earlier story I did……..



Data sources for James E. Harrington and wife

his sep 29, 1911 Blade obit

-born in county mayo, ireland on July 1 in 1829
-1849 came to alabama, 8 weeks
-8 years in ohio working as farm hand, sent money back to his mother in ireland
-1853 married bridget mcgreal
-1857 covered wagon to fairbury, farmed, no railroad tracks yet
-farmed with brother Edward until 1860
-in 1860, purchased 40 acres southwest of fairbury, house was plastered
day Lincoln was elected
-died in 1911
-his parents name was not included, must have got that from ancestry?

So, obit documents his brother Edward was in Fairbury.

Wife's obit

-story matches his obit
-does not give her parent's name

pretty solid data for James E. Harrington and his wife, not so solid for his parents.

Data sources for Edward Harrington and wife

His 1908 obituary:

-born Jan 12, 1819, in Ireland
-went to alabama with his brother in 1849
-his brother james came to fairbury in 1857
-edward came 2 years later in 1859
-they farmed together
-1854 married Kathryn Bryde, 9 children

Her 1890 obit:

-no names for her parents
-pretty short obituary

So, no good data for the parents of the two brothers in the obits. It is possible Ancestry.com is wrong about the parents?

So go ahead and add Edward to my older family tree.

I ended up removing their parents, since I am not sure about it. Somebody has a family tree with Edward in it, and they show the parents I had before. I saved the old parents names in an image file in case I need it.

No Land purchases in Bureau of Land management database

Next Steps in this Research

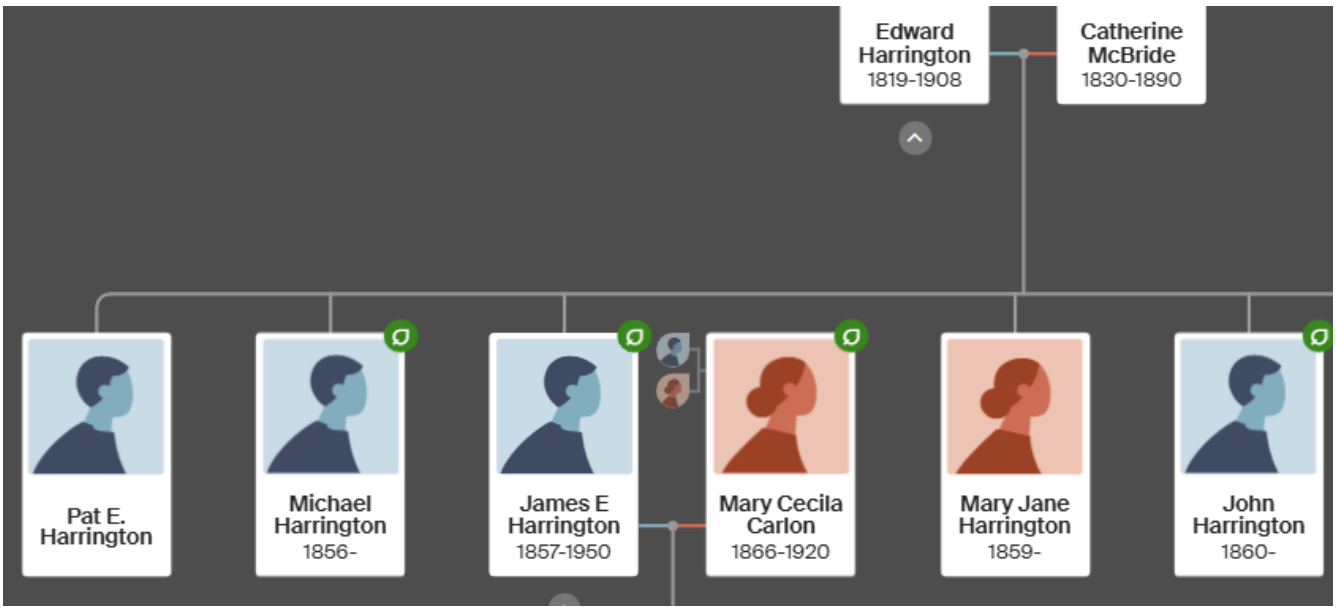
I filled out the family tree in Ancestry.com, added to the old family tree with the horse Harrington side of the family plus his partner Ford of Ford & Harrington.

Can I turn out the non-horse family into a typical Fairbury History Story?

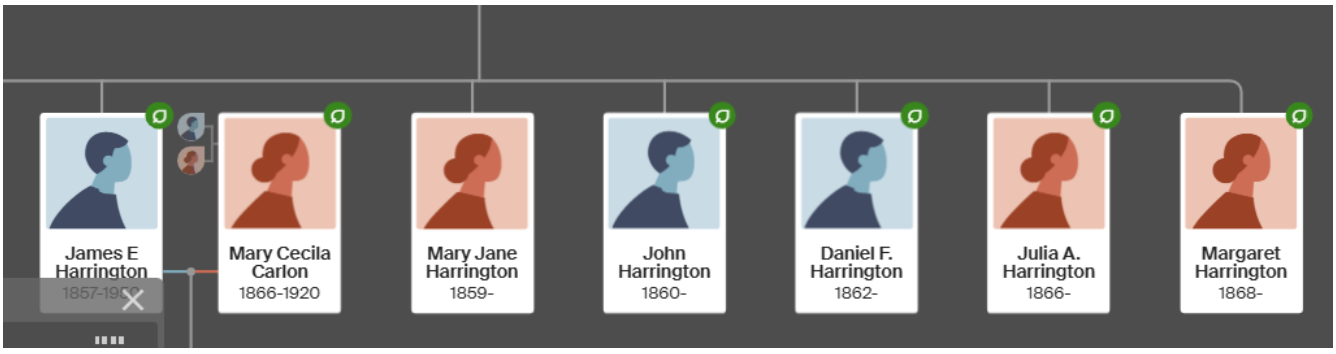
Story line would go like this:

-very interesting trip of 2 brothers from Ireland to cincinnatti and then Fairbury
-2 brothers marry, each one names one of their sons after their brother
-mention horse side of the family briefly
-run through the non-horse side of the family
-tie into the Claudon side briefly
-enough for a history story, wish I had 1 more significant item, but I don’t have one

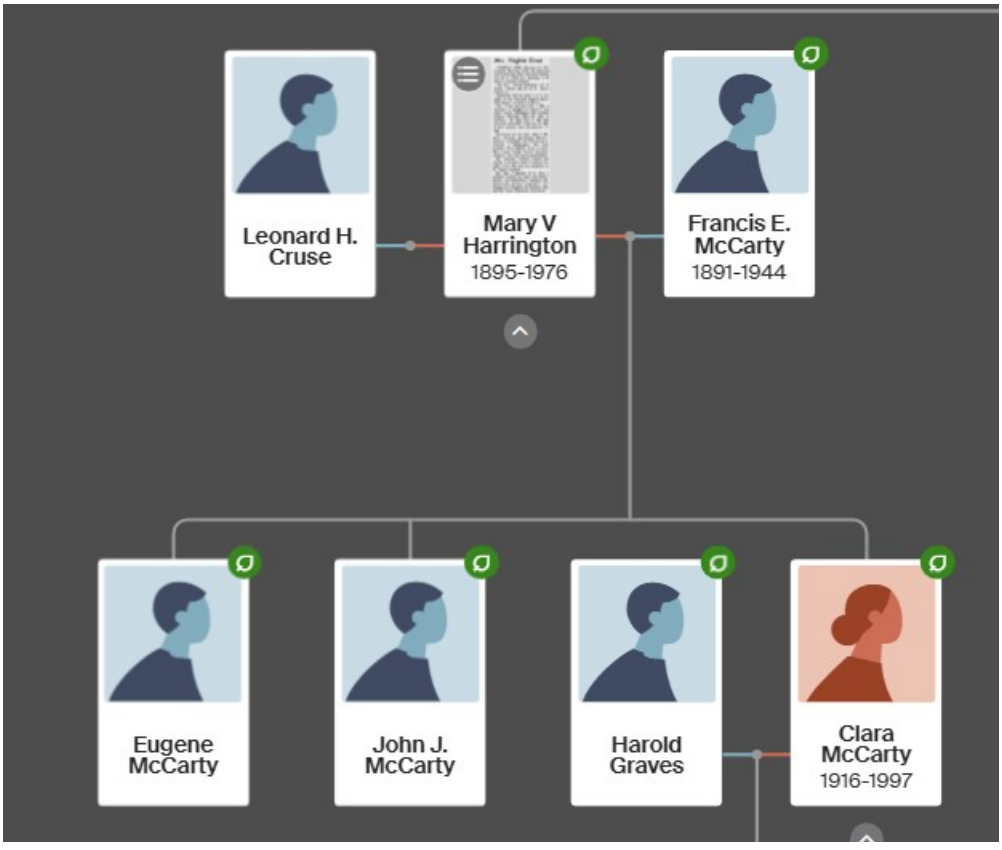
Family Tree of Non-Horse side of the family from Ancestry.com

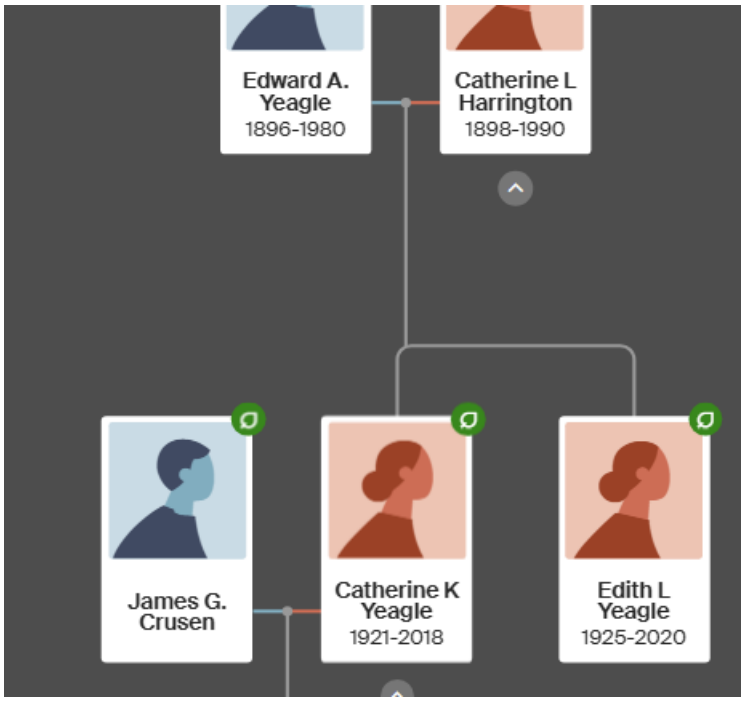


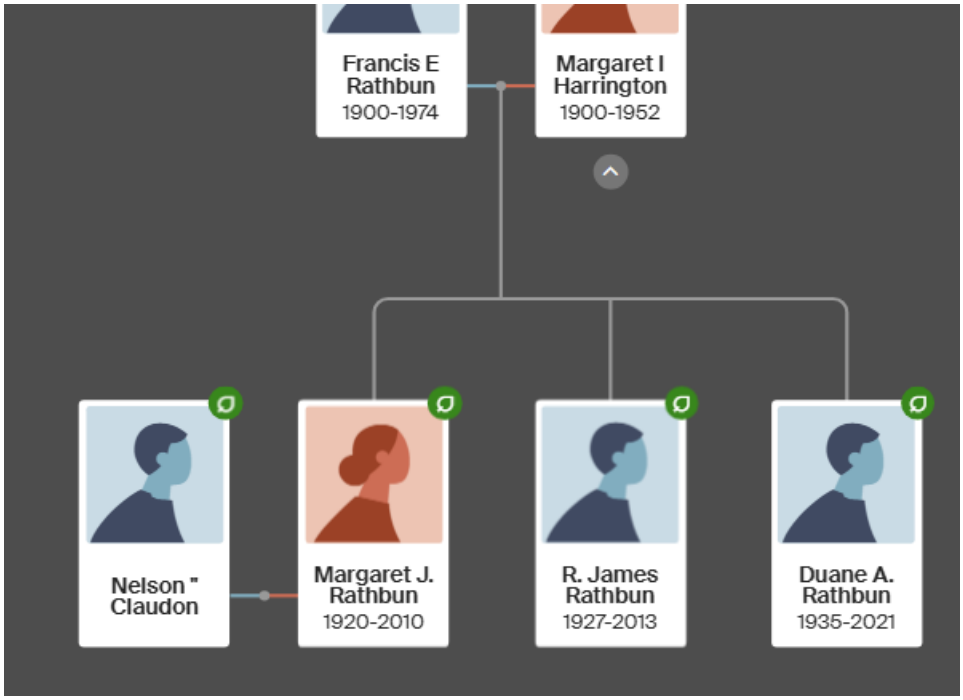
LH side of Edward Harrington tree shown above. RH side is shown below:



3 Daughters of James E. Harrington (1857-1950)




Edward A. Yeagle
1896-1980
Catherine L Harrington
1898-1990
James G. Crusen
Catherine K Yeagle
1921-2018
Edith L Yeagle
1925-2020


Francis E Rathbun
1900-1974
Margaret I Harrington
1900-1952
Nelson " Claudon
Margaret J. Rathbun
1920-2010
R. James Rathbun
1927-2013
Duane A. Rathbun
1935-2021

Timeline for the story

1819 Edward Harrington born in County Mayo, Ireland.
1829 James E. Harrington born in County Mayo, Ireland. County Mayo is in northwest Ireland? parents are unknown at this time.
1845 The Irish economy grew between 1760 and 1815 due to infrastructure expansion and the Napoleonic Wars (1805–1815), which had increased the demand for food in Britain. Tillage increased to such an extent that there was only a small amount of land available to small farmers to feed themselves. The potato was adopted as a primary food source because of its quick growth in a comparatively small space.[47] By 1800, the potato had become a staple food for one in three Irish people,[47] especially in winter. It eventually became a staple year-round for farmers.[48] A disproportionate share of the potatoes grown in Ireland were the Irish Lumper,[19] creating a lack of genetic variability among potato plants, which increased vulnerability to disease.[49]

In 1845, a blight ruined the potato crop and this blight continued through 1849. In America, this is called the Irish Potato Famine, the Irish call it the time of the Great Hunger. Roughly one million people died of famine and between 1845 and 1855, at least 2.1 million people left Ireland. Ireland's population of 8.5 million resdients before the Potato Famine has only recovered to 5.3 million in 2025.

When the potato famine started in 1845, Edward Harrington was 26 and James E. Harrington was 16.
1849 Brothers Edward and James Harrington decided to emigrate from Ireland to America. Their father had died, they left their widowed mother in Ireland. Arrived april 8, 1849 in Mobile, Alabama, after a 8 week voyage. The next day they traveled to Cincinnati, Ohio. They were shocked to find that town in the middle of a cholera epidemic.

-explain cholera
-to avoid catching cholera, they found work as farm hands 16 miles away from the city. James worked for one year and earned $72 for his services, and he sent $60 back to his widowed mother in Ireland. James was in Ohio for 8 years working for three different farmers with pay ranging from $6 to $15 per month.
-on may 20, 1853, james married Bridget McGreal near Cincinnati. both 23 years of age. they had

James E. Harrington, at the age of 20, decided to escape from the famine and emigrate to America. His ocean voyage in 1849 from Ireland to Mobile, Alabama, took eight weeks. After reaching Mobile, he left by riverboat for Cincinnati, Ohio. James worked in Ohio as a farmhand for eight years. In 1853, James Harrington married Bridget McGreal. They left Ohio in a covered wagon and traveled for 17 days until they reached what is now Fairbury. They made their covered wagon trip just a couple of months before the new Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. James and his brother Edward Harrington farmed land they rented southwest of Fairbury. In 1860, James Harrington purchased a 40-acre farm in Indian Grove Township. In 1888, James Harrington retired from farming and moved to Fairbury. James and Bridget Harrington had six children.

Check obits for other details about the voyage, problems in cincinnatti?

Name	**Edwd Harrington**
Arrival Date	Feb 3, 1849
Age	30
Gender	M (Male)
Port of Arrival	New York
Port of Departure	Liverpool
Place of Origin	Great Britain
Ship	Olive

The worst year of the famine was 1847, which became known as "Black '47".[5][6] The population of Ireland on the eve of the famine was about 8.5 million; by 1901, it was just 4.4 million.[7] During the Great Hunger, roughly 1 million people died and more than 1 million more fled the country,[8] causing the country's population to fall by 20–25% between 1841 and 1871, with some towns' populations falling by as much as 67%.[9][10][11] Between 1845 and 1855, at least 2.1 million people left Ireland, primarily on packet ships but also on steamboats and barques—one of the greatest exoduses from a single island in history.[12][13]

Edward Harrington ☆

B: 1819 County Mayo, Ireland
D: 1908 Fairbury, Livingston Co., IL USA

Fairbury History Story

I wrote a new Fairbury history story covering both brothers Edward and James Harrington. I will likely publish it in the month of May, 2025, on FairburyNews.net.

Other documents

I will send copies of all the files I found doing this research including the obits for Edward and James Harrington.

Dale C. Maley
May 9, 2025